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Edited Abstract

from

ASSESSMENT OF THE THREAT OF COMMUNIST SUBVERSION IN THE BAGHDAD PACT AREA - U.S. SUBMISSION FOR LIAISON COMMITTEE MEETING, KARACHI, 20 JANUARY 1959

(Assessment Written 31 December 1958)

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I. THE IMMEDIATE THREAT TO THE MIDDLE EAST

Since July 1958 the nature of the Communist threat to the Middle East has undergone significant changes. The fundamentals of the present approach were set forth last fall in an article by Ponomarev in Kommunist. There have been increasing signs of friction between the International Communist Movement and radical Arab nationalism as represented by President Nasir. Instead of emphasizing state-to-state relationships and uncritical support of nationalist movements with little regard for the fate of Communist parties in the area, the International Communist Movement has increasingly stressed the role of the Communist parties and "the masses" in the "struggle for national liberation," has opposed the unitary structure of the UAR and has cautiously but clearly criticized the Egyptian leadership for distrusting and even suppressing the Communist Party and denying it freedom of action. The specifically Communist threat, only thinly veiled now by a nationalist veneer, has thus become more imminent to the Middle East area and cannot be equated with whatever subversive threat may exist in specific instances from extreme nationalism.

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II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Some of the aims and objectives of the U.S.S.R. in the Middle East have remained the same during the period under review whereas others have changed. The present aims can be summarized as follows:

(a) Destruction of security systems such as the Baghdad Pact, which are directed against Soviet aggression and Communist penetration.

(b) Complete elimination of Western political, economic and cultural ties and their replacement by Soviet Bloc ties and influence.

(c) Establishment of the Soviet Bloc as the major source of military supply and advice, the most important trading partner and source of economic aid, and a prominent source of cultural influence in the countries of the Middle East area.

To these well-established aims, the following appear to have been added as important goals during the period under review:

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(a) Acceptance of Communist Parties as active, overt participants in "anti-colonial" governments in the Arab states.

(b) Prevention of the further extension of Arab unity on the UAR pattern and pressure for the loosening of the Egyptian-Syrian ties.

III. METHODS

The methods of the Soviet Bloc in the Middle East are also undergoing changes. While there is still stress upon state-to-state relationships, increasing emphasis is being put upon the local Communist parties as standard-bearers of "democracy" and as the true representatives of the masses. The Soviet Bloc has so far been careful not to oppose Arab unity as such, but it has steadily advocated the idea of federation as opposed to the idea of union in the Nasir sense. An article by Alberto Jacoviello, a member of the Central Committee of the Italian Communist Party, which appeared in the Italian party organ L'Unita on October 26, 1958, set forth the present position of International Communism with regard

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to this problem. The article declared that the Arab Communists believed that the Arab unification movement should proceed from the bottom and not from the top as was done in the uniting of Egypt and Syria. Federal union should be based upon "the most ample autonomy" of each country which adheres to the union, as is the case of Yemen with respect to the UAR. The article discussed the dispute between the advocates of complete and immediate union between Iraq and the UAR and the Communists who stand for loose federation. The article claimed that the Communists are supported by "the majority if not all of the governmental leaders in Baghdad" and, in Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon at least by the masses. In an implied threat it stressed the need of the Arab governments for support by the "organized masses" in any federation scheme. The opposition to the expansion of the UAR which had become more and more articulate on the part of International Communism thus has been brought fully into the open, even though lip service is still paid to the general vague idea of Arab unity.

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Khalid Bakdash, the Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party and one of the leading Communists of the Arab countries, in a statement in December 1958 which was published in the Beirut pro-Communist weekly al-Akhbar, advocated the establishment of separate governments for the Syrian and the Egyptian regions of the UAR in addition to the central government. Statements of this kind obviously are designed to prepare the ground for a loosening of the structure of the UAR and an inhibition of the growth of Arab union on the UAR pattern.

Thus there has been a hardening of the Soviet attitude and the support of established ultranationalist governments has become much more qualified than it had been before the formation of the UAR.

Middle Eastern distrust of the West has continued to be exploited, albeit in modified forms. The primary theme at present is that the Western powers are seeking now to divide the Arab world, in order to reconquer it piecemeal. In this effort the differences between the UAR and Iraq are credited to Western machinations.

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In its general propaganda the Soviet Union still plays strongly the theme of Soviet military capabilities and technical achievements and tries to exploit the fear of war. In this respect there has been little change during the period under review, although with a general hardening of the Soviet attitude in international affairs, the threats of eventual military action have become perhaps more frequent. The Soviet attitude with regard to US Allies in the area has also hardened. The negotiation of bilateral agreements between the regional members of the Baghdad Pact and the United States in accordance with Article 4 of the Declaration of July 28, 1958, has intensified Soviet propaganda attacks against the Pact and the Pact members.

The Sino-Soviet Bloc has also continued its efforts to exploit Arab and Afro-Asian gatherings for its purposes. It has, in addition, sought to use these organizations and meetings to exert pressure upon the UAR Government and to obstruct any possibilities for the normalization of relations between the UAR and the West. The Arab Lawyers Conference held in Baghdad in November 1958

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was under strong Communist influence after the arrest of a group of prominent pro-UAR Ba'thist lawyers prevented their attendance. At the Afro-Asian Economic Conference held in Cairo in December 1958, the leading Soviet representative tried to win approval for a violently anti-Western resolution of a political character. There was, however, considerable resistance by non-Bloc delegates to this pressure by Communist elements and the resolution was voted down.

In the general field of Afro-Asian solidarity activities, the Sino-Soviet Bloc has attempted to outflank Arab nationalist leaders by placing primary emphasis on unity of action in support of African liberation efforts; the UAR Government is already deeply committed to a policy of supporting these liberation movements, and has so far accepted the principle of Sino-Soviet Bloc participation in the support effort. In particular, the UAR's acceptance of unity of action between the International Conference of Arab Trade Unions and the World Federation of Trade Unions in the Cairo Trade Union Conference of September 1958 in support

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of the "Algerian Liberation Struggle" represents a precedent which is likely to embarrass and inhibit the UAR Government in developing effective counters to Communist maneuvers. The forthcoming Afro-Asian Youth Conference in Cairo may create additional problems of this nature.

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